



BILLING CODE: 3410-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

**Stakeholder Listening Opportunity for Priorities in
Research, Education and Extension**

AGENCY: National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of listening sessions and stakeholder feedback opportunities.

SUMMARY: USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture announces its stakeholder listening initiative "NIFA Listens: Investing in Science to Transform Lives." This stakeholder listening opportunity informs the research, extension and education priorities of NIFA, which has the mission of investing in and advancing agricultural research, education and extension to solve societal challenges. These investments in transformative science directly support the long-term prosperity and global pre-eminence of U.S. agriculture. This listening opportunity allows stakeholders to provide feedback on the following questions: "What is your top priority in food and agricultural research, extension or education that NIFA should address?" and "What are the most promising science opportunities for advancement of food and agricultural sciences?"

This effort to obtain input on NIFA's science priorities will be carried out through online and in-person submission mechanisms. Stakeholder input received from the two mechanisms is treated equally. The priorities and opportunities obtained from this effort will be evaluated in conjunction with input from NIFA staff. This information will be critical for NIFA's evaluation of existing science emphasis areas to identify investment opportunities and gaps in the current portfolio of programs. The information obtained through this iterative analysis and synthesis will help to ensure the strategic positioning and relevancy of NIFA's investments in advancing agricultural research, education and extension.

DATES:

(A) Online Input: Submission of online stakeholder input to the target questions will be open upon publishing of this Notice through 5pm Eastern time December 1, 2017.

(B) In-person Listening Sessions: Four listening sessions, each a full day, will be organized throughout the United States to obtain input from all stakeholders, including small institutions, local business and other stakeholder groups. The listening sessions will take place on October 19, 2017, October 26, 2017, November 2, 2017 and November 8, 2017. Each session will begin at 8:30 am and is

scheduled to end by 5:00 pm local time. Each session will include a presentation of the goals and background information on NIFA programs, followed by comments from stakeholders. Each registered speaker will receive 5 minutes to share their comments with the Agency. If time allows after all comments from registered speakers are made, unscheduled speakers will be allowed 5 minutes to present their comments to the Agency. The length of the sessions will be adjusted according to numbers of participants seeking to provide input. All parties interested in attending an in-person listening session must RSVP no later than October 12, 2017. These sessions will be webcast and transcribed. Information about registering for the in-person session, providing written comments and viewing the webcast can be found at <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistsens>.

REGISTRATION: The website, <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistsens>, includes instructions on submitting written comments and registering to attend or speak at the in-person listening sessions. All parties interested in attending an in-person listening session must RSVP no later than October 12, 2017. The number of attendees and oral commenters is limited due to time and space constraints (see below). Oral commenter slots will be

allotted on a first-come, first-served basis. All interested stakeholders, regardless of attendance, are welcome to submit written comments.

COMMENTS: Written comments are due by December 1, 2017. Written comments must be submitted electronically through <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistsens> or emailed to NIFAlistsens@nifa.usda.gov.

ADDRESSES: The in-person listening sessions will take place at conference facilities in Kansas City, MO (October 19, 2017), Atlanta, GA (October 26, 2017), Sacramento, CA (November 2, 2017), and Hyattsville, MD (November 8, 2017). All parties interested in attending an in-person listening session must RSVP no later than October 12, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Megan Haidet, Program Specialist, NIFA, at 202-401-6617, email NIFAlistsens@nifa.usda.gov, or visit <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistsens> for detailed information about providing written comments, joining the in-person sessions remotely, or registering to speak at an in-person session.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The science priority-setting process at NIFA involves soliciting stakeholder input on agricultural research, education and extension needs, obtaining input from NIFA's science staff who are informed

through interactions with scientific communities, and evaluating existing programs to identify critical gaps in the current portfolio of programs in order to address challenges in U.S. agriculture.

This listening effort will focus on answers to the following questions, "What is your top priority in food and agricultural research, extension or education that NIFA should address?" and "What are the most promising science opportunities for advancement of food and agricultural sciences?"

NIFA welcomes stakeholder input from any group or individual interested in agricultural research, extension or education priorities for NIFA. NIFA is eager to listen to stakeholder's comments on the priorities, solutions and opportunities that will facilitate long-term sustainable agricultural production, research, education and extension. This listening effort will focus on the agricultural science that NIFA invests in, but not on NIFA processes or procedures.

All parties interested in attending an in-person listening session must RSVP no later than October 12, 2017.

Abstracts from in-person speakers can be submitted upon registration via <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistsens>.

Written comments by all interested stakeholders are welcomed through 5 pm Eastern time, December 1, 2017. All input will become a part of the official record and available on the NIFA website, <https://nifa.usda.gov/nifalistsens>.

Done at Washington, D.C. on September 8, 2017.

Sonny Ramaswamy,
Director,
National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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